

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

---

[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Beth Ann Scott  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Rock Branch Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 4616 1st Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Nitro State WV Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 25143-0000

County WV

Telephone (304) 755-1443 Fax (304) 755-0019

Web site/URL https://www.putnamschools.com/o/rbes E-mail beth.scott@k12.wv.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. John Hudson E-mail jghudson@k12.wv.us  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Putnam County Schools Tel. (304) 586-0500

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Robert Cunningham  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

---

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

---

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 14 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 4 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 5 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 23 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	7	5	12
K	14	19	33
1	9	13	22
2	14	19	33
3	19	18	37
4	14	19	33
5	18	17	35
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	95	110	205

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 1 % Asian
  - 5 % Black or African American
  - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 90 % White
  - 0 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 13%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	16
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	30
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	225
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.13
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	13

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 3 %  
6 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 62 %

Total number students who qualify: 128

8. Students receiving special education services: 20 %  
41 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism                  | <u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>6</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>2</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>13</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>2</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	13
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	8
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	3
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	93%	93%	94%	94%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

The mission of Rock Branch Elementary School is to be respectful, be responsible, and to be a leader determined to always do the very best.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Rock Branch Elementary has operated utilizing a hybrid model. At the start of the school year, 80 students were working remotely and 131 students were in-person learners. The academic year began on September 8, 2020. Student arrival and instruction began 30 minutes later than in previous years. Students with certain last names coming every other day was also an initial change.

On September 21, 2020, all students who were registered as in-person learners began attending school five days per week. Students then worked remotely some weeks and attended school during other weeks depending on the newly developed West Virginia COVID-19 color-coded county map. At the conclusion of the first nine-week grading period, students were given the option of returning to in-person instruction or becoming virtual students. The bulk of Rock Branch’s student population chose to return to in-person learning and only two selected the virtual option due to health concerns. Currently, as of the fourth nine-week grading period, 18 students have remained virtual while the rest have utilized the in-person learning option.

The academic year began with 9 in-person classroom teachers and 4 virtual teachers. Now, 3 teachers have remained virtual and 11 are teaching in-person. Rock Branch teachers have also instructed students from 3 additional elementary schools in Putnam County this year. The changes to instruction and the way students have learned have been overwhelming. Receiving report cards

with failing grades was the primary reason why copious students returned to the school building to learn. For the last 8 weeks, teachers and all school personnel have been working tirelessly to close achievement gaps so students can master as many content standards as possible for the 2020-2021 school year.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

---

The character of Rock Branch Elementary is unique. Besides having a fairly transient population, the student body consists of various academic, social, and emotional needs. Multiple families associated with Rock Branch are not comprised of full-time working adults, and substance abuse is prevalent in several homes. Consistent attendance has been a struggle with various families in the community. Most decisions at Rock Branch Elementary are based upon diverse, low socio-economic family and community situations. The school's poverty and transient rates rank the highest in Putnam County. Due to these statistics, Rock Branch fortunately has three Title I teachers and a Cadre Teacher (retired PCS Teacher). This allows provision of reading and math intervention to students who may need it based on assessment data and teacher observation. Key strategies and practices are in place to ensure all students have equal learning opportunities besides intervention including after school tutoring, after school clubs, parental involvement activities through the Title I program, parent volunteer training, family nights, student leadership jobs, a student mentoring program, and walk-to-intervention. Additional measures have been taken to ensure students have clean clothing, warm bedding and blankets, weekend food bags for in-person students, daily meals for virtual students, and referrals for vision/dental needs. Both Rock Branch Elementary and Putnam County Schools have written grants to assist with these measures.

It has been realized that students cannot successfully learn unless these primary needs have been met. Once these needs are ensured, the focus shifts to getting students to school each day on time. Frequent home visits with local law enforcement are made. The principal and counselor place phone calls to families and send certified letters for assistance in understanding the importance of children being in school daily. To provide student incentives, the "Start Your Day in a Paw-sitive Way" program was established. It motivates students to be at school on time by giving each homeroom a paw when all students have arrived. When a classroom receives 10 paws, they are provided with a 30-minute extra recess break. Classrooms with the most improved attendance are also challenged to a student versus staff basketball game or kickball game.

Students have several learning obstacles due to social and emotional issues. Due to Rock Branch's small student population, staff members are well acquainted with student families and are familiar with family histories, which allows the staff to understand how to motivate and prompt success. During the initial "Kick-Off the New School Year" staff meeting, discussions are held about making families feel welcome and comfortable while in meetings, during meals, and during SAT/Parent-Teacher conferences commence. Rock Branch Elementary plans a new theme for every school year focusing on happiness, responsibility, and respect for others. A "Manner of the Month" program began last year where students are recognized for showing overall excellent manners or for displaying the current manner of the month.

After attendance incentives and parental support are established, high expectations for students and staff follow. The principal emphasizes the importance of daily professional dress each year. It allows students to see they should take pride in themselves and their appearance. The staff has recently participated in professional development with Amy Carlson about stress behavior in students versus misbehavior and how to properly address these behaviors while figuring out their triggers. This assists in comforting students and aiding them with these behaviors in the future. When students bring a purple folder to the principal, counselor, or another available staff member, this signals the student simply needs time to talk with someone other than their classroom teacher for a few minutes. This has significantly increased student encouragement and support.

Over the last five years, Rock Branch has been devoted to improving curriculum, outlooks, and expectations in math, writing, and reading academic areas. The school regularly raises funds and spends \$6,000 - \$7,000 per year on an Engage NY math curriculum. It is extremely rigorous and has allowed students to improve upon mental math, problem-solving, and engagement. Coupled with Number Talks, it helps students build a sense of numbers in three distinct ways. Number Talks allows students to think flexibly giving them opportunities to break numbers apart and make problems easier. This helps students to use and refine specific strategies such as adding in chunks. Students across all grade levels have enhanced their number senses and overall math proficiency. Continual research and improvement upon writing, reading, and vocabulary curriculum assists in reading fluency and vocabulary growth goals.



Finally, proactive Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings have largely contributed to continued growth. Staff members spend approximately three hours per month together to review student data as part of formative and summative assessments. Goals are set, evidence to support whether strategies to meet these goals are working or not is provided, and appropriate intervention/enrichment for students is decided. Once a month, data team meetings and vertical team meetings are held to discuss academic, social, emotional, and physical student concerns.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students were forced to stay home for a long duration. Teachers worked diligently to facilitate successful remote learning. Lack of technology was a prominent obstacle. Document cameras or laptops were not initially available, so personal technological devices had to be used for implementing instruction. Rock Branch has a low socioeconomic status, which exasperated the problem. Many students lacked Internet access or working devices for instruction. Students did not receive iPads until early fall. Therefore, staff began reaching out to families with teacher-made materials and necessary supplies. Often, students received supplies hand delivered by staff members. Teachers shared ideas with one another on adaptation methods of personal cell phones and laptops for better instruction. Workday hours often increased into the evening to accommodate working families with a variety of instructional options including Zoom meetings, YouTube videos, and Facebook live sessions. In the infancy of the pandemic, Rock Branch's staff rose to the diverse challenges of off-site learning with students at the forefront of these efforts.

After analyzing national data, Rock Branch Elementary adopted the Eureka math curriculum in 2014. Prior to its adoption, the school lacked a researched-based, rigorous, and differentiated math program. Teachers were using multiple programs that lacked cohesiveness. After the teachers were trained in the Eureka program, they became dedicated to ensuring this program would advance students in numerous areas. The program works not only solving algorithms, but in giving students a true number sense that enables them to solve more challenging problems with multi-steps. The program works comprehensively through all ages while exposing students to the same mathematical language. The Eureka program has been used by all grades for five years. It has been vital in the advancement of student achievement across all grade levels. Since Eureka has been such a seamless success, test scores have improved drastically during state assessments. Unfortunately, the pandemic has caused some obvious setbacks in instruction. Therefore, it was decided to supplement math fluency deficits with programs such as IXL Math, Zearn, iReady, and Reflex. Formative and fluency assessments are built into Eureka Math. Students are given daily exit tickets to display their learning progress from the lesson. Students who were not successful with the lesson are given extra instruction with Cadre, Title I, or regular classroom teachers.

The Putnam County-adopted program for language arts is Wonders by McGraw-Hill. Teachers do use various components of this, but have also found greater success in supplementing materials. These resources address areas of weakness based on iReady, STAR, and WVGSA data. Currently implemented programs include IXL Reading, Read Works, Storyworks, Scholastic News, Achieve 3000, and Accelerated Reader. These programs have been carefully evaluated by staff for their efficacy and enables them to exceed WV Content Standards. Achieve 3000 is a multifaceted digital reading curriculum that encourages growth in multiple areas on individual Lexile levels. Teachers can progress monitor individual student Lexile levels according to the activity score. Later, this allows for differentiation of instruction among students. As a result of deficits in the current reading program and lost instructional time, primary grades have implemented Saxon Phonics. It has an incremental approach to reading, spelling, and writing. Several Rock Branch teachers were already trained in the program and were very experienced with its implementation. Therefore, students have continued to make steady gains in this area.

At the start of each school year, summative end-of-year assessments are analyzed in vertical teams to decide on new annual goals. Recently, Rock Branch's reading goals have converged to vocabulary. Staff noticed students from lower socioeconomic levels and from broken families did not have the expansive vocabulary that is necessary for their grade level. Strategies selected for improvement include Tier II Text Talk vocabulary implementation at all grade levels including cross-curricular vocabulary, using Cadre interventionists, and collaborating with Title I teachers while monitoring student progress. Bi-monthly collaboration meetings are used to scrutinize various formative and summative assessments. This determines necessary placement for intervention and enrichment groups.

Rock Branch Elementary staff members worked through PLCs to research and supplement the science curriculum with Mystery Science, Generation Genius, IXL, and Achieve 3000. Science standards are NBRS 2021

embedded in Achieve 3000, as well as reading instruction and Rock Branch’s math curriculum. This allows for more in-depth and comprehensive instruction. In social studies, the Harcourt curriculum is currently in use. It is supplemented through Rock Branch’s reading program, Walking Classroom, Scholastic News, and Time for Kids.

**1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):**

**1b. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

The preschool program at Rock Branch Elementary services four-year-old children and includes instruction in social/emotional, language/literacy, mathematics, science, the arts, and physical/health domains. The program utilizes Creative Curriculum, which is play-based and designed to use child-interest and authentic experiences to positively impact learning. Rock Branch’s preschool has adapted and modified the physical environment, movement of children, modes of learning, and family engagement practices due to COVID-19. Changes to the physical environment include distancing of furniture, seating, and sanitization protocols. Children are grouped in pods and move through the classroom using a color-coded system to create the most optimal and safe environment. Remote learning has impacted student learning and family engagement. Children actively participate in remote learning using TEAMS, videos, and home activities. To provide equity, an activity box with materials and resources for use during remote learning was provided to all children.

Preschool teachers acknowledge families as a child’s first teacher and partners with them to provide the best learning experience for all. Teachers and families facilitate two-way communication by using a messaging app and through online learning platforms. Parents are updated on student progress during informal meetings and conferences. Parent interviews indicate overall satisfaction with remote learning and child progression. Preschool standards align with academic K-3 standards. The preschool at Rock Branch establishes high expectations for all students, uses developmentally appropriate practices to align with all early childhood standards. Participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at the school and district level ensure standards align with curriculum requirements and are actively pursued. Indicators of the positive impact on student learning and success in primary grades is measured using observations, early learning assessment data, and can be seen in short-term and long-term assessment results.

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

Related Arts courses are an integral part of the student experience at Rock Branch Elementary. Students engage in music, physical education, library science, and horticulture classes on a weekly rotation schedule. With the overarching goal of providing a well-rounded education, special area teachers work in conjunction with grade-level classroom teachers to assist student achievement. Rock Branch’s team approach helps faculty build the “whole student” through varied subject areas.

Music instruction is based on Feierabend’s 3D Music Education philosophy, dividing proficiencies into three content areas: “doing” music (singing, movement, playing instruments), music literacy (reading/writing musical notation), and knowledge “about” music (evaluation, history, relationships to other content areas). Each area is factored into every lesson to facilitate simultaneous development of copious musical skills. Students are given performance opportunities on both face-to-face and virtual platforms. A recent example of a typical music experience at Rock Branch Elementary was a West Virginia-themed music study. Students learned West Virginia folk songs, engaged in making “old-time” music through traditional instruments, folk danced, participated in a family musical history project, and interviewed representatives from prominent West Virginia arts organizations. Developing into musically competent adults with a lifelong appreciation of music is the ultimate musical goal for students. Music instruction at Rock Branch Elementary supports this vision.

Physical education at Rock Branch Elementary has strong foundations in movement and bodily fitness. Maintaining a welcoming atmosphere where all students feel comfortable in physically expressing

themselves is an essential aspect of instruction. Students are given decision-making power concerning certain class activities, building on Rock Branch's collaborative teamwork goals. While competitive play is one component of physical education classes, it is not the overall emphasis of the program. Students regularly participate in formative fitness assessments to track physical development. "Student of the Week" recognition and Outstanding Performance T-shirts in the FitnessGram Pacer running test provide incentives for accomplishments. School improvement is also a significant aspect of the physical education curriculum. Students assist in raising funds to upgrade gymnasium equipment, including a recent \$4,000 basketball goal upgrade which was largely funded by Rock Branch's student body. Classes gain senses of community, good citizenship, and school pride through these facility improvement efforts. Rock Branch Elementary's physical education experience proves that regular physical fitness has profound influence on student learning, development, and achievement.

Students visit Rock Branch Elementary's library once a week during special area rotations. Classes peruse books, check out selections for personal use, listen to selections read aloud, engage in discussions about various titles, and implement library housekeeping. New titles are added to the library approximately twice per academic year. Book spine labels, topical sections, and the Dewey Decimal System are discussed extensively which prompts student independence in book searches. Education about the Accelerated Reader program, various authors, and children's literature awards (Newberry Medal, Caldecott Medal, etc.) is also provided.

An additional exciting facet in Rock Branch student learning opportunities involves horticulture. Initiated by West Virginia University's Extension Service, Rock Branch's recently built outdoor high tunnel for student use is part of Putnam County Schools' garden-based learning program. Classes visit the high tunnel to learn about harvesting produce, plant life cycles, compost, soil, maintaining garden beds, and foodborne illness prevention. Vegetables grown in the high tunnel are often used in the cafeteria during lunchtime.

### **3. Academic Supports:**

To address achievement gaps, Rock Branch Elementary personnel collaborate and additional resources are provided to students and families in attempts to meet diverse and individual needs of the school and community populations. All professional and service staff within the school hold all students to high academic and leadership standards.

Differentiated instruction is provided both in regular classrooms and Title I intervention groups. Students with needs identified by the classroom teacher but not yet entered into the Student Assistance Team Process (SAT) are accommodated with research-based modifications to increase achievement. Special education services are provided to students identified as Learning Disabled. Students are provided instruction according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. All IEPs are reviewed and modified as needed annually. The development and implementation of Professional Learning Community (PLC) goals serve to target deficient skill areas and directly address achievement gaps through additional instruction in multiple settings.

Title I personnel provide targeted intervention in small skill groups and through co-teaching for all grade levels. Special education students are also included in Title I interventions. Cadre (retired teacher) personnel are available four days per week to provide additional intervention in small skill groups or as part of classroom group rotations. Rock Branch's Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) assesses, diagnoses, and treats communication disorders in identified students. An Individualized Education Program specifically addressing speech related goals is developed and implemented by the SLP. Bi-weekly collaboration is held with classroom teachers, Title I personnel, and principal. Assessment data is examined, students' academic needs are identified, Title I intervention skill groups are discussed and modified as needed, student SAT referrals for academic or behavioral modifications, testing, and placement are addressed during collaboration meetings. Critical Skills Reading Tutoring is offered twice per week after school for grades 2-5.

A variety of formative assessments are utilized to monitor and provide qualitative student data. This data allows staff members to measure individual student achievement. Data gleaned from STAR Reading and Math assessments in grades 3-5 and I-Ready assessments in grades K-2 serves as a tool to monitor bi-weekly progress and growth.

As a part of Rock Branch's school enrollment packet, parents are provided with information specifically addressing Student Residency and a Home Language Survey. Based on this information, it is determined if a student/family qualifies for assistance under the federal government's McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. The school counselor offers resources and connects families with agencies such as the United Way to offer a variety of aid. Additionally, school community partnerships are established to provide shoes, clothing, and weekend food bags. Rock Branch Elementary has a full-time counselor, and a shared social worker and virtual counselor. Social and emotional support for students and families is also provided for both in-person and virtual students in individual and group settings.

The Home Language Survey provides information related to the language the student learned when beginning to communicate, as well as the language spoken most frequently in the home. This information is then used to determine if a student is a candidate for English Language Learner services (ELL). Students may then receive additional support from an ELL teacher. An annual English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) is administered to students qualifying for English Language Development services. This assessment allows the ELL teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses students are experiencing and target instruction to best meet each students' individual needs.

Rock Branch Elementary is committed to providing a targeted approach to high quality instruction, intervention, and social/emotional support. High expectations and extensive community support help in meeting the diverse and specific needs of all students and accelerate closure of achievement disparities.

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

---

### **1. Engaging Students:**

Student engagement has notably increased over the past six years at Rock Branch Elementary. Upon entering the school and observing various classrooms, the principal realized this was an educational area that needed attention. This became a focal point in Rock Branch's PLCs (Professional Learning Communities), staff collaborations, and faculty meetings. Teachers shared and discussed Global PD videos, which offer positive student engagement information. The principal provided opportunities for teachers to observe their peers during a beneficial peer observation cycle. IPI Trainings (Instructional Practices Inventory) were also arranged. IPI is a data collection profile system designed to establish processes for accurately measuring the nature of instructional practices across an entire school. It allows observers to see what levels of student and teacher engagement are taking place daily in a classroom. During a professional development day, Rock Branch's faculty utilized this data collection process to analyze the relationships between instructional practices taking place within classrooms. During PLCs, staff members were able to discuss the strategies desired for improving student engagement. Strategies that stemmed from this process and began being implemented included KWL, Four Corners, Think-Pair-Share, and Wraparound. Superior classroom management, effective teaching, and learning results from student engagement and is emphasized in all grade levels.

This past academic year, Rock Branch teachers have adapted to new ways of learning, engaging students, and building relationships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Creativity with student engagement while keeping an emphasis on academics has resulted. Teachers have successfully found ways to motivate students from behind a computer screen. Rock Branch's staff was committed to weekly professional development as this "new normal" was navigated through. To address emotional needs, Rock Branch's counselor was invited to attend virtual class meetings to offer support and encouragement. During district-wide remote learning periods, numerous Rock Branch teachers voluntarily spent virtual lunch periods with their classes just so they could spend time together. Several played silly games to create laughter and participation. It wasn't uncommon to hear of surprise visitors in virtual meetings, show and tell for student presentations, or sending mail to students as they learned about letter writing. Several drive-thru pick up days were planned that allowed parents and students to drive by the school to get schoolwork or necessary supplies. A schoolwide drive-thru for Christmas was a highlight during this period. All staff members dressed in holiday costumes, live music was played, and gifts were distributed to students.

Rock Branch Elementary's staff collectively works together to ensure success for all students across grade levels and subject areas. Maintaining a positive environment that facilitates individual social, emotional, and academic growth is essential for student engagement. Students experience this setting of comprehensive development each day and are visibly engaged as a result.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Rock Branch Elementary recognizes and values the importance of involving families and community entities for student success. Pre-pandemic, numerous opportunities for families to get involved at the school were offered. Parent nights and invitations to "Breakfast at the Branch" were frequent throughout the academic year. Positive messages that taught valuable parenting lessons was the primary focus of school family gatherings. Through the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), parents were encouraged to become involved with classroom celebrations, achievement recognition ceremonies, and Read Aloud opportunities.

A program called "Grandfamilies" is special to Rock Branch. Partially due to the current West Virginia opioid crisis, several students are being raised by grandparents. Once a month, Rock Branch grandparents were contacted and invited to attend a Grandfamily event. This gathering was intended to establish relationships with the school counselor and community leaders such as pastors, DHHR representatives, police officers, social workers, lawyers, etc. These meetings provided time to provide legal advice for foster parents or legal guardians, resources offered by DHHR, and information on school technology usage, accessing grades, and tutoring options. "Parenting Partners" was another unique Rock Branch offering. This

was a parent luncheon to discuss various developmental topics from study tips and time management skills to developing self-esteem.

Continuing to engage families and community entities during the COVID 19 pandemic has been challenging, but it has remained a top priority. From the beginning of the national shut down, Rock Branch's counselor, principal, and teachers made weekly phone calls, conducted home visits, and delivered food to students and families. As the shut-down continued, a "counselor check in" was provided online and technology help for new student iPads was provided. Community partnerships with Cross Lanes Baptist Church, Rock Branch Independent Church, and Nitro Church of God have continued over the past year. Every student received a backpack filled with school supplies at the beginning of the academic year and food bags have been provided on a weekly basis. Shoes have been provided for various students through the private organizations Boots for Babes and Putnam Shoes. School cooks worked tirelessly during remote learning periods to provide meals for all families to pick up at the school or for delivery via school buses.

As the COVID 19 pandemic continued, the Schoology learning platform has been an invaluable way of reaching families. A Rock Branch parent page was developed to keep families informed of grades and how to virtually participate in school-wide activities (such as spelling bees and reading nights). A "Counselor Corner" page was created for parents to stay abreast of different services available (United Way, Christmas gift assistance, Mental Health providers, etc.). Different lessons are also posted each month for family engagement. Some of these lesson topics include cyber-safety, conflict resolution, equality, and managing anxiety. The counselor invites students and parents to participate in live discussions on a wide range of topics once per week. The most important part of these various service provisions is keeping students, families and school staff connected on a regular basis. This promotes combined successes in emotional, social, and mental health.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

The professional culture at Rock Branch Elementary has positively grown over the past six years. Staff members feel equally valued regardless of their specific positions and consistently work together to maintain a productive working environment. During remote learning periods at the beginning of the academic year, staff unity was highly visible. Teachers helped packed lunches, cooks helped paint hallways, the principal sanitized classrooms daily, the nurse planned health lessons, and the counselor and secretary delivered meals to students' homes. These are only a few examples of how Rock Branch personnel worked as a team to support the school. When students began in-person instruction, a positive environment was obvious as the year's theme is "Sunshine and Smiles - Working toward Strength, Motivation, Intelligence, Leadership, Enthusiasm for Learning, and Success for ALL!"

As a staff, learning to change and adapt to the unknowns during the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging. School culture continues to thrive because staff members persevere together to find solutions to problems that have never been present until now. Weekly professional development sessions for areas of weakness are always available to help assist teachers, which in turn reinforces assistance for parents and students. Teachers are encouraged to give professional development topic suggestions. Technology was the emphasis of the school's learning transition. Teachers were required to instruct virtually, how to navigate and operate a software that would be utilized for communication, attendance records, and grades. Frequent morning meetings to present concerns and attempts to problem solve issues together commenced during remote learning periods. Classroom, Title I, Resource, and Special Area teachers collaborated to problem solve, and assist parents/students who were struggling to adapt. Instead of becoming defeated, Rock Branch personnel worked together to support each other. This resulted in stronger staff unity and healthier working relationships. Subsequently, this enhanced school culture for the student body.

Numerous staff members are recognized for resolving issues or going above and beyond in a weekly email newsletter sent from the principal. Gratitude and appreciation are frequently provided through verbal praise, newsletter acknowledgment, and daily intercom announcements. A bulletin board to recognize adults in the building by other staff, parents and students is prominent in the main hallway. Teachers who are proficient on specific topics are given the opportunity to present professional development as needed. Many staff members also graciously volunteer their time to work one-on-one with teachers who needed additional

support. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) remain in operation as well. This gives additional time for grade level teachers to collaborate in small groups.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

Rock Branch Elementary prides itself on the belief that student learning is the fundamental purpose of education. School leadership reflects this principle. Rock Branch consists of a caring community and a specific moral purpose. The entire staff establishes a superior standard of conduct and elevated achievement is demanded. Staff members create high-level expectations for all students and provide the support necessary to achieve these goals. This is largely credited to the principal and her established leadership skills.

The current vision of Rock Branch Elementary addresses the essential elements of student learning regardless of the child, their home situation, or their learning ability. Setting goals that motivate students to progress academically, socially, and emotionally are a priority. The vision is recited every morning during intercom announcements. Rock Branch has a “Vision Board” that is displayed at the entrance of the school to showcase students who have met goals or those who are acknowledged for their positive behavior, excellent manners, or academics. Each month, every faculty member selects a new student for recognition. This mission and vision were created by our school leadership team and reviewed by staff members who chose to participate. It took one year to create, establish, and teach students and parents how to interpret and understand this vision of creating leaders. These were formulated to show students how to take responsibility for their actions, while setting no limits to promoting high rates of academic and social success. This can be seen year to year in Student Leadership Notebooks.

Effective schools have effective leaders. An effective leader commands respect and honesty from themselves, their staff, and their students. They transmit a well-defined set of goals. Rock Branch’s principal is always working to improve school facets and is visible in all aspects of the school. She is involved in all curricular areas, SAT Meetings, is the first to greet students each morning, and is the last person students see at the conclusion of the school day. The principal has a lively disposition and continually spotlights students and staff members for their accomplishments. She advocates for her students, holds them accountable for their actions, and expresses high expectations for herself and all members of her school community.

The inauguration of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is a proud accomplishment the principal has achieved at Rock Branch Elementary since her tenure began. To better enhance the impact of the vision and mission, the school leadership team intentionally plans PLC agendas. Each member of the committee is expected to attend and the facilitator leads the meeting. Academic gaps and achievements are monitored, student behavior is discussed, goals are set, and all are revisited the following meeting. During PLC times, teachers share effective strategies and discuss appropriate interventions to ensure the needs of every student are being addressed. Data is collected and analyzed throughout the academic year during PLC meetings, with an emphasis on formative evaluations and beginning/middle/end-of-year assessments.

#### **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Addressing the diverse needs and backgrounds of students is prioritized at Rock Branch. Every student, family, and staff member that walks through the school doors should feel respected and represented. Students should feel comfortable in the school setting before they can engage in learning. The staff puts a terrific deal of effort into making this come to fruition.

Intertwining curriculum, extracurricular activities, and social/emotional support for those from all walks of life ensures equity, cultural awareness, and respect in the classroom. To provide a fair opportunity for every child to receive a proper education, personnel strive to meet the child where they are. Several examples of this can be found in the curriculum itself. Rock Branch’s reading curriculum exposes students to several different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. Saxon Phonics teaches sign language, which opens the door for discussion about disabilities. Students are taught the origins of specific songs and settings of musical stories in music class. The children learn cultural dances from distinct areas of the world and how to sing in foreign languages.



African drums, lessons in Appalachian folk music, and a tropical island unit utilizing Polynesian/Caribbean/Asian aspects are also experienced. Rock Branch's preschool class currently has an enrolled student from Mexico. This has inspired an entire unit on Mexico, with the children learning Mexico's map location, Mexican currency, art projects with the Mexican flag, and Spanish vocabulary terms.

While learning about different cultures can help build respect, another avenue for building esteem is through social/emotional learning. The school counselor focuses on this by teaching lessons both in the classroom and through virtual platforms. Every week, the counselor provides lessons in the preschool classroom that focus on teaching the children about emotions, kindness, being a good friend, and social skills. She teaches monthly lessons to all grade levels on social/coping skills, anti-bullying, kindness, conflict resolution, respect, self-esteem and equality. Once a week, "Lunch Bunch" sessions are held online for virtual students to learn and discuss these topics. The counselor also goes into classrooms per teacher's request to discuss an array of topics as needed.

Over the past year, we have lived through current events and social movements greatly impacting all our lives. Through the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr., classroom discussions about commonalities, differences, and loving/respecting one another are of utmost importance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rock Branch personnel have learned to make countless adjustments in how students are reached while making sure staff members remain accessible. This is especially important in a geographic area that is plagued by opioid abuse. Assuring student access to technology, food, and mental health services has been ongoing. Providing free tutoring, Cadre and Title I supports, and after-school enrichment programs in gardening, yoga, art, fit boxing, and journalism are additional ways Rock Branch Elementary has tried to help keep students positive and decrease stress. The goal of students and staff honoring each other's differences while belonging together as one school unit is paramount.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

Six years ago, Rock Branch Elementary unfortunately had some of the lowest WVGSA and STAR test scores in Putnam County. It was common to hear references of Rock Branch being the “poor school” in the area. Staff turnover was immense and school culture was not positive. The school had a different principal every 2 years for nearly a decade. Rock Branch’s current principal vowed to change the perception of this “hidden gem.”

Goals were soon set to improve academic learning and test scores. The school piloted and later adopted the Engage NY and Eureka math curricula. An astounding number of parents disagreed with this change. However, after intense training and over a year’s worth of research and endeavors, Rock Branch faculty convinced Putnam County Schools to allow Rock Branch Elementary to use this math curriculum even though another was adopted by the county. Parents soon realized this was exactly what their children needed to understand mathematics and improve comprehensive cognitive processing. Eureka Math has convinced families it is not enough for students to know the process for only solving a problem. They need to understand why that process works. Teaching mathematics as a "story," Eureka Math builds students’ knowledge logically and thoroughly to help them achieve a deeper conceptual understanding. While this approach is unfamiliar to those who grew up memorizing mathematical facts and formulas, it has been tested and proven to be the most successful method of schooling in recent history.

During remote learning periods, this mathematical practice continued to the fullest. Personnel taught lessons daily on TEAMS and utilized researched videos and PowerPoint slides to assist with keeping the students converged on this way of thinking and learning. When students returned to in-person instruction, they continued to have the confidence needed to master standards due to the fidelity of teaching among teachers. This approach to thinking has also allowed students to enhance reading comprehension and problem solving. It also has improved higher-order thinking skills. Rock Branch now has the highest math test scores in Putnam County Schools and reading/writing scores continue to increase.

Rock Branch Elementary today boasts a confident poise. Staff turn-over is minimal and respect is an established norm. As one walks through Rock Branch’s hallways, the quality of amazing experiences occurring in grade- level, Title I, special area, and preschool classrooms is exemplary.